

My name is Kathryn Ross. I'm from Bloomfield Hills and I'd like to introduce myself. I'm a mother of 2 grown children and grandmother of three, a wife of 40 years, and a former teacher. I'm a member of the Michigan chapter of the Million Mom March which is a grass-roots organization that advocates for gun safety and sensible gun laws. It may be hard for some of you to believe, but we are not the enemy.

Even though the authors of HB 5143, HB 5142, and HB 5153 use the terms "defensive force" or "deadly force" instead of firearms or guns, the fact that these bills are similar, if not identical, to bills being introduced through out the country by the NRA lobby indicates that they are definitely considered gun bills.

I'm one of those people the National Rifle Association and some of the sponsors of these bills might refer to as an "anti". I am an "anti" but not in the way that the NRA and radical Second Amendment advocates would like you to believe. I'm anti gun violence; I'm anti illegal guns; I'm anti children and innocent people getting shot. What I am not is anti-gun.

I took my first shooting lesson with a .22 before I was 10 years old with my twin brother's Cub Scout troop at what was known to me as Williams Gun School, near Flint. When I was a kid, on beautiful fall days I accompanied my Dad while he hunted pheasants. In the 40 years my husband and I have been married I have given him the same birthday present every year for his November 14th birthday...time off to get up north for the opening day of deer season.

I taught riflery and firearm safety classes using the NRA guidelines, for about 8 years in a public school outdoor education center.

I say all this because I want it to be clear that I am not "anti" guns.

As granted in the U.S. Constitution we, as American citizens, have the right to bear arms, but with that right comes responsibility...

the responsibility to see that the firearm is never used illegally or irresponsibly.

The bills that are before the house judiciary committee today take away that responsibility for a gun owner. Under the guise of "self-defense" and protecting ones "castle" these bills would allow anyone who "feels threatened" the right to shoot someone. This isn't a self-defense bill. This is a vigilante bill. This bill gives someone the right to take the law into their own hands—to be judge, jury and executioner of someone by whom he feels threatened. If one kills another person, he or she needs to be held accountable. If a police officer, in the line of duty kills someone who is obviously engaged in a crime, he or she is responsible; there is an investigation and s/he is held accountable. An ordinary citizen who uses "deadly force" should be investigated.

HB 5143 & HB 5153 state: "A person is presumed to have held a reasonable fear of imminent peril of death or great bodily harm....")

Because one feels afraid or threatened does not mean that there is an actual reason for that fear or that a threat actually exists. Let's face it...people who carry guns are people who already feel threatened...that's the reason they carry a gun in the first place. Police officers and military persons, by the very nature of their jobs feel threatened and rightfully so. CCW holders obviously feel threatened, otherwise they wouldn't feel the need to carry; criminals feel threatened by the very nature of what they do and some people feel threatened because they see more evil in this world than good. It's obvious that people who choose to carry guns are fearful people and I respect that, but, if

they act on those fears and kill someone, they must be held accountable. It cannot be "presumed" that they held a "reasonable fear". That must be investigated and proven. Taking away the need to prove one acted in a responsible manner is a license to kill with no penalty. That is wrong!

I have no doubt that people should have the right to protect themselves and defend themselves and those laws are on the books already.

I ask the supporters: What is the compelling need for this law? Where is the list of cases where law-abiding citizens were prosecuted for defending themselves?

Can you see the possible abuses of this law? What if the "intruder" were a college-age son wanting to surprise his Mom for Mother's day? What about domestic abuse situations? Or my mother, who has senile dementia, wandered into another's home? Do you really think you should allow someone the right to kill her and not be held accountable?

Ask yourself what you say you want to accomplish with this law. For example: Let's say someone broke into a house and is hit over the head with a jar of pennies by the occupant, thus injuring or killing the intruder. If you want that intruder or his family to be prevented from suing the home owner, then offer a law that does that, not one that offers *carte blanche* to kill someone without penalty. Present a law about frivolous lawsuits, but don't hamstring law enforcement in investigating crimes.

I recognize that people are sick and tired of crime. I understand the desire to be pro-active, but there is such great potential for abuse in this law. There needs to be checks and balances; there needs to be accountability which is what the law of self-defense now offers.

In the present CCW classes it is impressed upon those applying for a permit that carrying a gun is a heavy responsibility and using it is not to be taken lightly. If this law passes the CCW classes will need to stress that if you're going to shoot someone, you'd better shoot to kill so you can claim you were fearful for your life and the victim cannot argue with you; he cannot explain that he was really in your home because you had invited him or that he knocked on your car window because he needed directions or because he wanted to get your attention so you would stop hitting a child.

Yes, criminals have guns and use guns and because of the many illegal guns and easy access to guns in this country there is a lot of fear. If you say you want the citizens of Michigan to be able to protect their families and their property, there are better ways to accomplish that goal than to pass these laws. One of the best ways is to work towards getting illegal guns off the street and prevent them from getting there in the first place. If you haven't worked to close the gun show loopholes, then you haven't worked hard enough to protect Michigan families. If you haven't worked to outlaw cheap, accessible, Saturday-night specials, then you haven't worked hard enough to protect Michigan families. If you haven't worked to see that every person who applies for a handgun permit has a thorough background check, then you haven't worked hard enough to protect Michigan families.

I do not have any impressive titles. I'm not an attorney. I'm not a former or present public official. I'm not the director of anything. I am not a lobbyist who gives lots of money to election campaigns. But I do have a very important title. I am a citizen and citizens need to be considered. I urge you not to support HB 5143, HB 5142, and HB 5153.